

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair Broadcasting Group forbid its ABC affiliates from showing Ted Koppel's 40-minute tribute to fallen troops in Iraq because the programming appeared to be "motivated by a political agenda." Even before refusing to run ABC's Nightline in April, Sinclair had amassed a long record of partisan bias passed off as news. In September 2001, the group required its affiliates to air messages "conveying full support" for the Bush administration, including requiring some news, sports and even weather anchors to read messages saying they stood "100% behind our President." In July 2003, Sinclair banned a DNC advertisement.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.